

# OPENING DOORS FOR EUROPE'S CHILDREN

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STRENGTHENING FAMILIES. ENDING INSTITUTIONAL CARE.

## GREECE

### COUNTRY FACT SHEET

There is no official database holding data on children in alternative care within Greece. According to the first nationwide mapping study carried out in 2014 by the campaign's National Coordinator in Greece, there were 2,825 children and adults living in 85 institutions for children throughout Greece. Worryingly, some of these institutions house children with disabilities as well as adults, sometimes keeping them in cages and tied to their beds. The medical model of caring for those with disabilities is still maintained in Greece and institutional culture is not questioned. Lack of know-how, private donors supporting private institutional care and the persistence of an institutional culture are the main challenges preventing the implementation of DI reforms in Greece. In August 2016, there were 27,500 refugee and migrant children stranded in Greece and 3,779 unaccompanied children had been referred<sup>1</sup> for accommodation since the beginning of 2016<sup>2</sup>. According to UNICEF only one third of the unaccompanied children was staying in formal shelters<sup>3</sup>.

"In 2015 the Opening National Coordinator in Greece conducted a nationwide mapping study<sup>4</sup> which found that Greece had a patchwork of public and private institutions and other residential care housing with little or no quality control and no system to monitor the number of children in the institutions or what happened to them, given it was not mandatory for institutions to have a state license. After the mapping study, it became mandatory to have a state license and the Minister of Labour, Social Insurance and Social Solidarity decided to cut funding given to institutions if they did not comply with the license requirement. However, this has not yet been put into practice.

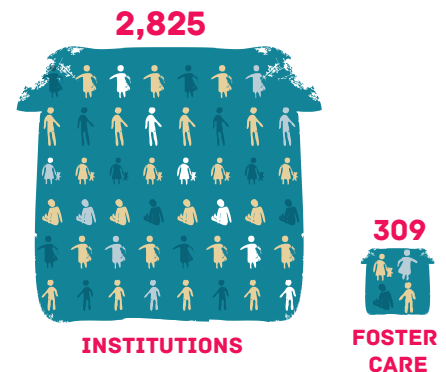
In Greece, the main reasons children are placed into institutional care were reported to be due to disability, neglect and abuse. There is a lack of services to provide support to families and there are no real alternatives to institutions available. According to findings from 2014 there were 2,825 children and adults in 71 institutions for

1 Up to October 2016

2 [http://ec.europa.eu/justice/fundamental-rights/files/rights\\_child/data\\_children\\_in\\_migration.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/justice/fundamental-rights/files/rights_child/data_children_in_migration.pdf)

3 [https://www.unicef.org/media/media\\_92675.html](https://www.unicef.org/media/media_92675.html)

4 [http://1hdmqe4103z34ebytkgz1uu.wpengine.netdna-cdn.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/Data\\_institutionalised\\_children\\_Greece.pdf](http://1hdmqe4103z34ebytkgz1uu.wpengine.netdna-cdn.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/Data_institutionalised_children_Greece.pdf)



**2,825 CHILDREN IN 85 INSTITUTIONS  
IN COMPARISON TO 309 CHILDREN IN  
FOSTER CARE FAMILIES**



**1/3 OF UNACCOMPANIED  
MIGRANT & REFUGEE CHILDREN  
IN FORMAL SHELTERS**

children and an additional 14 institutions for children with disabilities in Greece. 182 children in institutional care in 2014 were babies and toddlers aged 0-3 years. Recently the Judge of the Supreme Court ordered for babies who were abandoned in maternity hospitals to be temporarily placed in foster care until their case was examined. However, the Ministry of Health has now changed the procedure and a new unit to provide temporary accommodation for abandoned babies has just been constructed.

Foster care is greatly underdeveloped in Greece. Moreover, due to the lack of community based services and financial support young adults with disabilities who grew up in foster families are even re-institutionalised due to the lack of funding for foster care families. New legislation foreseen in the coming months is expected to reduce the procedural burden of foster care as well as ensure investment in public awareness raising, training and supervision of foster carers. However, private and Faith based institutions do not participate in foster care and adoption programs as they are not certified and not obliged to follow legislation.

Due to the current refugee crisis, the number of unaccompanied refugee and migrant children in Greece has increased significantly. Children are placed in detention centres and in refugee camps across Greece under dreadful conditions since the shelters are full. The government recently announced that children will be transferred in old, not in use, orphanages and schools in order to be protected. These institutional settings will be able to accommodate hundreds of children each until a solution is found. Read the Opening Doors myth on children on migration.

## FAST FACTS & LATEST DEVELOPMENTS

- **IN 2014 THERE WERE 2,825 CHILDREN AND ADULTS LIVING IN 85 INSTITUTIONS FOR CHILDREN, 760 WERE ADULTS.**
- **883 CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES WERE LIVING IN INSTITUTIONS IN 2014.**
- **IN 2016 THERE ARE 1,610 UNACCOMPANIED REFUGEE AND MIGRANT CHILDREN LIVING IN REFUGEE CAMPS ACROSS GREECE.**
- **NEW LEGISLATION WITH REGARD TO FOSTER CARE IS EXPECTED TO BE IMPLEMENTED IN THE FOLLOWING MONTHS.**
- **A DI STRATEGY IS EXPECTED TO BE ANNOUNCED IN THE COMING MONTHS.**
- **THE OPENING DOORS NATIONAL COORDINATOR, ROOTS RESEARCH CENTER HAS OPENED A CARE LEAVERS HUB FOR ADOLESCENTS AND YOUNG PEOPLE OFFERING PSYCHOSOCIAL SUPPORT AND GUIDANCE FOR THOSE WHO STILL LIVE IN INSTITUTIONS AND THOSE WHO HAVE ALREADY LEFT.**

### OPENING DOORS NATIONAL COORDINATOR IN GREECE



Roots Research Center is working with adult adoptees who aim to find their biological parents, also they are supporting/consulting adopted families to work with their adopted children. Since 2004 they promote foster care, give speeches around the country, raising public awareness on the benefits of foster care and why community based care is better for children. They have been involved in private foster care cases of children with disabilities, supporting and consulting the foster parents. They run training seminars for social workers and University students promoting foster care and community based care. Other NGOs have showed interest, cooperating with them, in training their people on the DI direction, by supporting vulnerable families. Justice experts are their supporters on child protection affairs, walking with them slowly on the way to change the residential culture in Greece. visit [www.roots-research-center.gr](http://www.roots-research-center.gr)

### NATIONAL PARTNERS

Federation of Women's Associations of Heraklion Crete, Iliachtida, Family support center of the Holy Archdiocese of Athens Foundation Family and Children Support Center, NGO Association of adoptive families Amfidoron, Therapeutic riding association, Association of Juvenile Court Curators NGO Federation of Greece, Network for Children's Rights

The Opening Doors for Europe's Children campaign supports national efforts to develop child protection systems that strengthen families and ensure high-quality family and community-based alternative care for children, by leveraging EU funding and policy and building capacity in civil society.

It is a partnership between 5 international organisations and civil society across 15 European countries. For more information go to [www.openingdoors.eu](http://www.openingdoors.eu)